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Official Records

115th plenary meeting
Thursday, 28 July 2011, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Deiss ..... (Switzerland)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Mac-Donald (Suriname), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 27 (*continued*)

High-level Meeting on Youth

Social development

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

Mr. Salam (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to thank the President of the General Assembly for having convened this High-level Meeting on youth, dialogue and mutual understanding as the International Year of Youth draws to a close.

Lebanon is in a region where one fifth of the population is between 15 and 24 years old. More than half of our population is below the age of 25. There are a great many problems facing youth in the Arab region, most important of which is the high rate of youth unemployment, particularly among girls — one of the highest in the world.

While tangible progress has been made in education over the past two decades, the rate of illiteracy, at more than 17 per cent, is still gravely high among young people. The quality of education is worsening in many instances. Despite the notable progress achieved in the filed of health, the degree of health awareness is still low among young people. Yet more dangerous is the growing sense of marginalization and repression among a wide spectrum of youth because of their weak participation in public life, in particular in decision-making processes. These are some of the reasons behind the waves of youth protests our region has seen over the past decades and the demands for improvements, in particular since last year.

On this occasion we emphasize that the aspirations of our young people to participate fully in building their own future are legitimate. The world of tomorrow is theirs; this cannot be denied. It is no exaggeration to say that the vitality, humanity and spirit of inventiveness of youth are the best hopes for their future, for socio-economic development and scientific development and technological invention.

We therefore emphasize the need for the United Nations, including specialized agencies, programmes and funds, to continue to support youth empowerment and the implementation of international obligations, in particular the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In this connection, we emphasize the need for young people to acquire information and communications technology, and the United Nations and donor countries should do their best to bridge the digital gap between the North and the South.

We hope that young people will continue to work towards the goals of peace — peace that leads to justice and security, to a world free of weapons of mass destruction. That means we must foster a culture of dialogue and mutual understanding among young

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people at the local, regional and international levels. We express our support for the resolution 65/312, containing the outcome document of the High-level Meeting on Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of San Marino.

Mr. Bodini (San Marino): On behalf of the Republic of San Marino, which I have the honour to represent, I wish to extend our deepest condolences to the families of the young people struck down in Norway a few days ago.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his leadership in dealing with youth issues. I also wish to thank the Permanent Representatives of Austria and Benin for facilitating the negotiations over the text of the outcome document of the High-level Meeting on Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding (resolution 65/312), which reaffirms the World Programme of Action for Youth and outlines the path for achieving internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

Today is the end of the International Year of Youth, but it is also the beginning of a new, exciting era for the new generation. In the Mediterranean and many other parts of the world, they have shown their determination to challenge their Governments in the streets and to fight for their rightful desire for a freer and better future.

Did our generation plan properly for its successors? Did we understand our young people's aspirations? Unfortunately, we did not do a good job. Millions of young people do not enjoy satisfactory security. Too many are dying from starvation, disease and war. Millions have no proper education or have no education at all. Too many are exploited sexually, or as underpaid workers or conscripted soldiers. A very large percentage are either unemployed or underemployed. Most have precarious jobs.

We cannot allow this nightmare to continue. We must re-energize our efforts from North to South, in developing and developed countries. We must act in a coordinated manner to provide prosperity and justice to our youth and restore in them a much-needed sense of dignity before it is too late.

We must find a focal point where all our efforts converge. Non-governmental organizations, schools, universities, corporations and the private and public sectors in every country must focus on the following priorities. We must protect our young people, mentally and physically. We must provide them with an effective education and create job security for them. We must give them a sense of belonging in our societies. And we must involve them in the decision-making process.

The United Nations is an ideal venue where we can exchange ideas, where we can help our future generations to understand one another and, in doing so, create a better and more peaceful world.

How can we enhance the well-being of our children? By renewing strong family ties and values, and by expanding social projects in which the underprivileged are at the centre of our efforts and those of our young people. We can sustain political systems in which human rights are protected, and we can offer our experience without imposing our way of thinking. We must always motivate and praise the efforts of young people when they are helping less fortunate peers. We must always encourage them to pursue their ideals of peace, freedom and dignity.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Andorra.

Mr. Casal de Fonsdeviela (Andorra) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to begin by offering our deepest condolences to the people and Government of Norway on the tragedy that struck their young people in particular, and also our firm support. It is so painful to have to begin a statement on the International Year of Youth with these sentiments, but dialogue and mutual understanding are the objectives of the International Year. Those objectives remain, more than ever, despite everything that has happened.

Young people are the future, a future that begins in the present, whatever that present may be — but always with the intention of improving it. We all agree that we are living in a world of change, in which it is hard to find values and reference points that can help guide young people towards the future. While this is true for adults, it is even more true for our young people, and of course the economic crisis has reinforced that feeling of instability and uncertainty.

Young people are among the primary victims of this crisis. To deny them access to the job market is to deny them a future and their prospects for full development. Paradoxically, it is young people who

have the energy to pull us out of this recession, and therefore States cannot forget the educational programmes through which they promote justice, liberty, courage and solidarity.

As the Secretary-General said, it is essential for young people to learn to listen carefully to each other, to empathize, to recognize the existence of differing opinions and to resolve conflicts. Young people do not need to be told what their needs are or how to achieve them. We must facilitate their efforts and provide them with the tools they need to achieve those goals.

In Andorra we believe in a few guiding principles with regard to young people: youth policies are for young people, of young people and with young people; young people have one identity that is based on a number of concepts; there is no such thing as a world of young people separate from the other citizens; and lastly, we believe that young people are citizens of Andorra but also of the world.

(*spoke in French*)

In order to promote these principles, in 2007 my Government created the National Youth Forum of Andorra. This independent body of young people and for young people is aimed at channelling voluntary participation in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the country. This initiative was strengthened at the end of 2009 by the Interministerial Youth Commission beginning its work. The Commission is made up of representatives from the Departments of Youth, Higher Education and Research, Culture, Housing, Health, Labour, the Interior, Social Welfare, and Statistics. The values that we advocate for young people — consensus, respect and dialogue — are the basic principles of our youth law, drafted with the consensus of regional institutions and social stakeholders.

We are also aware of the fact that providing young people with the means they need to attain full development is not enough. We must go beyond our borders and contribute to international programmes in this area. Andorra has shown its commitment to youth through, among other things, its support, totalling more than €90,000, to the United Nations Fund for Youth.

We must all continue recognizing and exploring what contribution youth can make to the creation of a fairer and safer world.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Abbasi, Acting Minister of Youth and Sport of the Islamic Republic of Iran, whose visa to attend this meeting was unfortunately not granted by the host country.

At the outset, I would like to express my delegation's condolences to the people and Government of Norway for the very tragic terrorist incident in which many young people were killed.

One of the main criteria for the evaluation of the progress and evolution of a country in today's world is the status of young people in that country. Indeed, the younger generation is the main potential for progress and dynamism in any society. The negative or less-than-optimal utilization of that potential could have a corrosive effect on the progress of that society. Therefore, it is reasonable for a society to provide for suitable education, welfare, recreation, training and vocational facilities for youth.

Sociologists maintain that young societies usually face what they call a "revolution of aspirations". This brings about intricacies and difficulties in the normal process of political and economic development, requiring special attention on the part of policymakers and practitioners so as to prevent the alienation of young people from society.

Meanwhile, the international community's meaningful and supportive cooperation in addressing the genuine aspirations of young people is critical at the present time, when the manipulation of art, technology and the modern media, along with increasing discrimination and inequalities, are some of its main shortfalls.

Iranian society, where young people comprise almost 60 per cent of the population, is described by sociologists as among the youngest societies in the world. Accordingly, meeting the needs and addressing the aspirations of youth have been and remain among the top priorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Based on this understanding, the statute of the High Council of Youth was adopted in 1992, with the aim of coordinating and supervising the role and functioning of youth institutions and organizations, and preparing the ground for emerging social centres to stimulate

youth creativity and potential in the field of culture, science and sport and providing them with job opportunities, marriage facilities, et cetera.

The National Youth Organization has been another main active organ responsible for the implementation of policies in this area. And in practice, there have been a number of initiatives to help young people realize their full potential.

I am distinctly pleased to inform the Assembly that in order to institutionalize this lofty goal of addressing the demands and aspirations of youth, the Ministry of Youth and Sport has been established at the Cabinet level over the past few months in the Islamic Republic of Iran. It is expected that this development will have a significant impact in terms of making national plans on youth more integrated and effective than before.

Meanwhile, and in keeping with the increased attention on the part of regional and international bodies to this issue, the First Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Ministerial Meeting on Youth Affairs was held on 29 and 30 November 2010 in Tehran, hosted and organized by the National Youth Organization of the Islamic Republic of Iran in collaboration with the ECO Cultural Institute.

Our recent national performance has proven that whenever the young generation is given chances and opportunities, regardless of barriers, they can make leapfrog progress in different fields, such as biotechnology, medical science, nuclear science and aerospace, to name just a few. Our progress shows the power of the younger generation in society and the ineffectiveness of challenges such as sanctions vis-à-vis the ironclad determination of youth, if and when they wish to determine their own future.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

Mr. Benítez Versón (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): As we gather here to discuss the topic of youth, we meet to talk about the future of humankind and the planet. But young people are not only the future; they are also the present. That is why we must act without further delay to face the serious problems affecting young people around the world.

At present, there are more 1.2 billion young people around the world — more than ever before in the history of humankind — and 85 per cent of them live in developing countries. In 2025, there will be approximately 72 million more young people than today.

Youth undoubtedly represents a formidable force for tackling the colossal current challenges. However, young people can be a driving force only if they have health, education and employment. To realize their full potential, young people need a world of peace. Young people have the right to be protected and fully involved in mechanisms for citizen participation and decision-making. They have the right to live in a world free of war and violence. They want, and deserve, a better future.

All these concerns were expressed at the World Festival of Youth and Students, a momentous event held last December in South Africa, with over 15,000 young people from 136 nations attending.

The situation facing Cuban young people is very different from that in much of the world. Cuban young people — accounting for 20 per cent of our population — enjoy broad protection and participate actively in the affairs of our society and State. Over 50 per cent of Cuba's total budget is allocated to health care, education, assistance, social welfare and culture.

Cuba's completely free health-care system of renowned quality and our universal and equally free education system are essential pillars of the humanistic vision of the Cuban revolution. Cuba provides 100 per cent of the education required by children and young people with special educational needs. The literacy rate among the population between 15 and 49 years old is 99.6 per cent. Cuba has a solid legal and institutional framework for the protection of children and young people from violence, abuse, mistreatment and discrimination.

Even with these successes, we do not claim to be perfect. Much remains to be done.

These achievements have been made despite enormous obstacles. The criminal economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States Government against Cuba for more than half a century, terrorist aggressions and acts, and the permanent hostile anti-Cuba policy of successive United States Administrations have denied Cuban young people the possibility to develop in a more favourable social environment.

In those difficult circumstances, Cuba has not only achieved significant results; we have also shared what we have, and not in moderation. Since 1961, more than 55,000 students from 135 countries have graduated in Cuba. At present, about 26,000 young people from Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa study in Cuba without cost. Of those, 22,000 are studying in the medical field. Currently, some 57,000 Cuban collaborators provide their services in more than 98 countries.

To conclude, I would like to underscore that young people are by definition revolutionary. That is why we are optimistic and are fully confident that young people will find new ways of change that push humankind to achieve a better world.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Mr. Ruiz (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Colombia extends its deepest condolences to the people and Government of Norway and condemns the brutal attacks that dozens of young people of that nation have just suffered.

My country thanks the United Nations for organizing this High-level Meeting on Youth and its valuable work in coordinating the direction and promotion of critical issues that affect the world's young people, such as strengthening international cooperation for youth through dialogue, mutual understanding and active participation so as to achieve social integration, employment and the eradication of poverty. We also believe that Member States, civil society organizations, international cooperation associations and the United Nations system have worked to promote the development and active participation of young people in society. One such example is the World Programme of Action for Youth and international conferences on that issue.

Colombia — slightly more than 50 per cent of whose current population is under the age of 25 — is satisfied with the outcome document of this critical Meeting (resolution 65/312). We believe that it will be a bastion for strengthening policies, programmes, actions and outcomes for the world's youth. In addition, with regard to that concept of strengthening, Colombia has called for more concrete and effective actions to bolster the rights of young people and make youth more visible as an essential sectoral axis in the development of integrated and intergenerational policies. That will be of great importance in establishing a United Nations agency for youth.

Such an agency would help to ensure the synchronization and implementation of cooperative youth activities without that agency replacing Government responsibilities and authority on the issue. On the contrary, establishing a United Nations agency for youth would mean, at the level of each nation, greater commitment to and support for the institutional strengthening of national youth systems. It would generate more timely local commitment on the matter.

In addition, Colombia believes that greater coordination and integration in the United Nations system on youth issues, centred on an agency, would promote the effective participation of young people in decision-making bodies. We should acknowledge the important work carried out by the World Programme of Action for Youth. That is an essential basis for our continued support.

The logic behind public youth policies must seek to ensure human development planning with a view to vital intergenerational contact that maximizes investment in adolescents and takes advantage of the demographic asset.

Colombia would like to underscore the work done to complement ratified international agreements, such as those of the San Salvador summit, which generated approaches calling for greater public and private institutionalization of the development of children, adolescents and young people and for their involvement in short-, medium- and long-term public policy decision-making and activities.

In that regard, Colombia has undertaken activities such as creating conditions for the effective universal enjoyment of youth rights and/or for restoring them when such rights have been removed. We have created conditions for the long-term reduction and eradication of conditions that restrict young people's equitable access to various rights, and conditions that permit their participation in the shaping and provision of services that they desire and need. We have also created and broadened opportunities for young people to further their potential through access to services designed in line with their various social, economic, political, family, cultural and geographic needs, and to develop their capacity to acknowledge both their rights and duties and their involvement and participation in the country's decision-making in an informed way.

Finally, Colombia appeals to Ibero-American States to ratify the commitments made at the 2010 Santo Domingo summit of heads of State.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Madagascar.

Mr. Andrianarivelo-Razafy (Madagascar) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, the Government of Madagascar extends its sincere condolences to the Norwegian Government and people following the terrible massacre of innocent people, which runs counter to our promotion of dialogue and mutual understanding.

Young people are a pillar of our development. In that regard, allow me to congratulate the President on this excellent initiative, which will certainly breathe new life into actions already undertaken to place young people at the core of every dialogue, every decision and every effort at local, national, regional and international levels.

Madagascar fully associates itself with the statement of the Group of 77 and China delivered at the 112th meeting.

As we near the end of the International Year of Youth, it is more pressing than ever to step up commitments towards an active and dynamic youth, partners and full participants in efforts for dialogue and mutual understanding among generations, cultures and people, and to bolster the effective implementation of such commitments.

Effective and tangible global development requires the flourishing and development of young people. Unfortunately, the reality is completely different. Every day, young people, in particular those in countries of the South, face considerable challenges: unemployment, limited or even no access to education and health care systems, socio-economic instability caused by various conflicts, and exposure to drugs, prostitution, sexual violence, modern slavery and many more.

It is our duty to find sustainable solutions to such challenges. That is why we are gathered here. Governments and civil society actors, in particular young people, must work together to find the way forward. The theme chosen for this meeting and for the International Year of Youth — dialogue and mutual understanding — is completely in step with that absolute need to work together in understanding and respecting our diversities.

The Malagasy population is slightly less than 22 million people, of whom 6 million — that is, 31 per cent — are between the ages of 10 and 24. The Malagasy Government, with the support of its partners and friendly countries, is sparing no effort in placing its young people at the centre of its priorities. To that end, it is directing efforts to creating conditions conducive to the full development of the young Malagasy, through a clear, well-defined judicial, legislative and technical framework, as well as through its national youth policy.

For example, Madagascar has established a National Institute for Youth, which organizes various courses, and the Ministry of Youth and Recreation has launched a community awareness programme on adolescent reproductive health. The Malagasy Government has started a youth investment fund and has undertaken a number of projects aimed at fostering young people's development and strengthening their leadership in the national life of the country. Our National Youth Council, at the local, regional and national levels, also strengthens youth structures and institutions. Our youth centres, which exist all over the island, and which the Government has made efforts to improve in recent years, are an important tool for young people's intellectual and social development.

Besides this, Madagascar — which has not been spared by the scourge of human trafficking, most of whose victims are young people — has instituted a national programme to counter human enslavement and human trafficking of young people. In order to combat sexually transmitted diseases, which affect young people in particular, we have launched various efforts to raise awareness and provide support, such as an anonymous, confidential and free telephone hotline for young people, which is available in all of Madagascar's 22 regions.

Our population is largely rural, and the Government has just launched a rural youth development project designed to support and encourage young agricultural entrepreneurs. Youth discussion clubs in 20 regions of Madagascar, with a membership of young people aged between 13 and 24, have been active since 2007, allowing them to express their views and exchange ideas on important issues such as conservation of the environment, education and

peace, and to broadcast them on weekly radio programmes.

The Government of Madagascar welcomes resolution 65/312, adopted by this High-level Meeting, and calls on the international community to guarantee follow-up to its commitments, particularly those concerning the World Programme of Action for Youth. We also call on Member States to increase their support for young people by implementing national policies and projects.

The number of young people in the world continues to grow, and their needs are enormous. The mobilization of resources must be genuine. The financial and technical support for young people at all levels must be maintained and increased, particularly in developing countries, including Madagascar, in order to guarantee young people's true development and growth, and to afford them the genuine possibility of taking a leadership role in sustainable and equitable development.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Raza Tarar (Pakistan): I take this opportunity to convey on behalf of the people and Government of Pakistan our heartfelt condolences and deepest sympathies to the people of Norway on the terrorist incidents of last Friday. Such despicable acts only strengthen our resolve to fight terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

Pakistan aligns itself with the statement delivered by Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China at the 112th meeting.

Today's meeting assumes a special importance in view of the myriad problems besetting humanity. Hunger, disease, climate change, terrorism, the unfulfilled promises of disarmament and multiple global crises all combine to conjure up a depressing picture. Only through dialogue and mutual understanding can we work in harmony to realize our common objectives. The theme of this Meeting, therefore, is most apt. Pakistan fully supports educating youth about the ideals of peace, justice, tolerance and solidarity to lay the foundation of a peaceful world and to achieve the objectives of progress and development.

With a population of more than 173 million, Pakistan is the sixth most populous country in the world. An estimated 104 million Pakistanis are below the age of 30. This youth bulge carries challenges and opportunities. Our young people are our greatest resource. In order to unlock their true potential, the Government of Pakistan has taken several steps and initiatives to enable our young people to fulfil their role in Pakistan's socio-economic development.

The National Youth Policy, formulated in 2008, aims at empowering young people and providing them with economic opportunities by integrating various youth programmes at both the federal and provincial levels. It puts special emphasis on addressing the needs of young women and youth with disabilities. Also worth mentioning is our National Vocational and Technical Education Commission, which strengthens younger workers by mobilizing funds and technical training, sponsored by private-sector and civil society organizations. In addition, the National Internship Programme, through paid internships, enables new graduates to work in various public sector organizations, helping to increase their employability.

Recent events in many parts of the world have shown that young people are the catalyst of political and social change. The voices of young women and men must be heard and respected. Their expectations and aspirations must be met by involving them in the decision-making process and allowing them to shape their own future and that of our world. While the primary responsibility for ensuring young people's development lies with individual States and their development of comprehensive policies and strategies, international cooperation remains a helpful tool for harnessing youth's potential, and particularly for ensuring equitable distribution of global resources and promoting non-discriminatory policies.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Costa Rica.

Mr. Ulibarri (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica welcomes the convening of this High-level Meeting as the diplomatic and political apex of the International Year of Youth.

Young people are an inescapable reality, full of energy and hope, and as such they must be taken into account in all our policies and actions, both nationally and multilaterally.

Costa Rica believes that it is every State's responsibility to acknowledge, promote and defend the

basic rights of young people, within the framework of the promotion of human rights in general. Respect for their rights and opening up the opportunities that derive from them are key to eradicating poverty, injustice, intolerance and inequality, and are essential to the creation of opportunities for self-realization among young people.

These convictions form the basis of our country's pioneering youth legislation establishing the national youth system. The system brings together State institutions and organized participation of civil society. Our public youth policy is proposed by the State but discussed and approved in all its aspects by a body that includes youth representatives.

Over the past few years, in order to meet the needs and respond to the proposals of our young population, and on the basis of an inclusive, democratic and free social vision, Costa Rica has focused on areas such as the promotion of entrepreneurship, the generation of employment opportunities, the right to recreation and comprehensive health care. We have also made a solid commitment to education, which is an essential part of our national identity and policies.

When it comes to youth issues, as with so many other issues, national responsibility is paramount, but it is also essential to involve the international community in order to achieve the implementation of the outcome document of this meeting (resolution 65/312) and of the World Programme of Action for Youth. We believe it is extremely important to create a matrix of indicators on the basis of the World Programme and the goals and objectives proposed in the outcome document. It will be particularly important to achieve the implementation of the commitments contained in the outcome document concerning the promotion of gender equality and equity and an acknowledgement of the particular vulnerability of girls and young people. The document quite rightly condemns the recruitment and use of young people in armed conflict. Costa Rica believes that the recruitment of young people for transporting drugs and organized crime activities is equally reprehensible.

The theme of this International Year of Youth, "Youth: dialogue and mutual understanding", requires us to take a look at education, respecting the rights and duties of our young people. To a great extent, comprehensive education promotes values such as dialogue for resolving differences on the basis of the quest for mutual understanding.

We particularly welcome, therefore, the Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training adopted by the Human Rights Council (HRC) on 23 March (HRC resolution 16/1). The text was presented by Costa Rica, Italy, Morocco, the Philippines, Senegal, Slovenia and Switzerland, the countries that make up the Platform for Human Rights Education and Training. Its primary objective is to develop a universal culture of human rights in which every individual is aware of his or her rights and responsibilities to others, and to promote the development of individuals as responsible members of an inclusive, free, tolerant, peaceful and pluralistic society. We welcome the fact that this premise was included in the outcome document of this High-level Meeting.

Our country reiterates the importance for the General Assembly, in accordance with the Human Rights Council Declaration and in implementation of resolution 60/251, to adopt the Declaration proposed by the Human Rights Council.

There is no greater criminal proof of intolerance and disrespect for life and dignity then terrorism, in particular when the targets are primarily young people. Costa Rica therefore emphatically condemns the terrorist attacks that took place in Norway on Tuesday. Its primary victims were young people who, because of their commitment to society, were participating in a Labour Party camp on the island of Utøya. We express our solidarity with their families, the Government and the people of Norway. We know that the response to this tragedy will be a greater commitment to tolerance and freedom.

I conclude by urging all States to act on the premises agreed on in the outcome document of this meeting. That will be the best possible way to give all young people the opportunity to fulfil their potential and use their energy and enthusiasm in service to the great tasks facing humanity.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Portugal.

Mr. Cabral (Portugal): Allow me to congratulate President Deiss on having organized this High-level Meeting, which marks the end of the International Year of Youth. We would also like to thank the two

co-facilitators, Ambassadors Thomas Mayr-Harting of Austria and Jean-Francis Régis Zinsou of Benin, for their hard work in achieving a consensus outcome document (resolution 65/312).

We are pleased to note that this high-level event firmly reiterates the World Programme of Action for Youth, including its 15 interrelated priority areas. Portugal reiterates its commitment to promoting and implementing the World Programme of Action for Youth and to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. We stress the need to strengthen international cooperation in support of national efforts to implement the World Programme of Action, and call upon all Member States to continue to implement it as a unified set of guiding principles for policies and programmes involving youth at the national, regional and international levels.

Portugal's commitment to the development and implementation of policies and programmes related to youth is unquestionable. I recall that it was on the basis of a recommendation made at the first World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, held in Lisbon in 1998, that the General Assembly declared 12 August as International Youth Day. Our goal is to strengthen policies and programmes involving youth, as well as to ensure a cross-sectoral participation by young people as major actors and active agents in all the decision-making steps of national, regional and international policies involving them.

Last year, we created the National Commission for the International Year of Youth, composed of both Government and youth organization representatives, which put in place a very comprehensive calendar of activities throughout the country addressing issues such as entrepreneurship and innovation, rights and equality, culture and diversity, and youth empowerment and democracy. In this framework, I would like to highlight the Second National Forum of Young Descendants of Immigrants and the African Diaspora, which took place in Portugal in February and which we believe helped to further a number of issues concerning youth.

During the next session of the General Assembly, Portugal will again present, in the Third Committee, together with Moldova and Senegal, its biennial draft resolution on policies and programmes involving youth. We also presented and facilitated the resolution on the subject during the most recent session of the Commission for Social Development in February.

Let me again stress the importance of young people as active agents for dialogue, positive change and development in global society and their role in stimulating tolerance and mutual understanding. Nevertheless, one major obstacle to young people playing their role to the full extent remains violence, of which they are the primary targets and to which, on so many different occasions and in so many different forms, they are exposed in a particularly acute way. Violence and the exploitation of children and youth in its many forms is one of the most important challenges facing the international community. It must therefore come to an end.

Portugal expresses strong support for the universal ratification campaign of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child: the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. We encourage all Member States not yet parties to sign or to ratify the Optional Protocols during the high-level segment of the General Assembly in September. We hope that this International Year will also contribute to that goal.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan.

Mrs. Aitimova (Kazakhstan): I should like at the outset to express my country's solidarity with the Government of Norway and its people. Last week, on the very day of the attacks, my President sent his condolences and those of the entire people of Kazakhstan in connection with the tragedy. I myself grieved deeply; what greater crime could there be than atrocities against young people and children? This meeting is therefore most timely.

Kazakhstan commends the progress achieved in effectively implementing the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, which represents an important road map. However, much more needs to be done to ensure closer monitoring and evaluation of the manner in which youth-related issues are incorporated into national policies to ensure the mainstreaming of our future leaders into the political, social, economic and cultural life of each of our Member States and their development agendas. We must also ensure the greater integration of youth-

related issues in efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, so that young people can be included in the existing order as well as serve as agents of social transformation.

My delegation calls for greater United Nations system-wide coherence and coordination and for the streamlining of the youth-related work of the 34 agencies that are focusing on the least developed countries and conflict zones, especially as concerns young women and girls. Hence we call on Member States to provide greater support in terms of funding and resources so as to make possible technical guidance and capacity-building with a view to implementing the World Programme of Action for Youth.

In view of last week's tragedy, every effort must be made to monitor social media and channel the energy of youth, as well as fund youth movements that foster harmony.

During the International Year of Youth, Kazakhstan has implemented a multidimensional, interdisciplinary and results-oriented national youth policy. Particular attention has been paid to enhancing social protection, reducing unemployment and improving educational opportunities for youth. According to my President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, youth socialization, the shaping of progressive attitudes and the imparting of modern values to the young generation are vital for national development. The country has therefore adopted the State educational programme 2011-2020 and an action plan with forward-looking measures and services, including the establishment of the modern and innovative New University. Quality education for youth is a prerequisite for social and economic well-being, and expenditure on education is claimed as a priority area for State budget funding in my country.

Kazakhstan established a Council on Youth Policy, under the auspices of the President, to mobilize youth participation in national policy decision-making and development. In addition, a national project on the youth talent pool was launched with a view to promoting decent employment for young people in public service and in the social, political and economic spheres. Since 2005, the youth labour movement, Green Country, has been a key player in connection with the country's ecological issues and environmental policy.

Kazakhstan reaffirms its strong commitment to promoting dialogue and mutual understanding by addressing the challenges affecting youth and contributing to multilateral efforts to give youth their rightful place as one of our richest resources.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Prosor (Israel): I would like to begin by offering my Government's condolences to the people and the Government of Norway following last week's appalling attacks in Oslo and Utøya. The victims of this tragedy — most of whom were young people — remain in our thoughts and prayers.

There is a Jewish story about a man who planted a carob tree, a tree that is known to bear fruit only after 70 years. When asked whether he thought he would live to eat from the tree, the man replied: "I am doing as my ancestors did. Just as they planted a carob tree for me, I am planting one for my children".

The commitment of one generation to the next is the foundation of strong and healthy societies. Protecting, integrating and empowering its young people stands as a fundamental obligation of every State. We must not neglect young people who find themselves on the margins.

Over the past 20 years, Israel has developed a comprehensive approach to respond to the needs of at-risk youth through major advances in legislation and increased public awareness. Israel launched a national programme for children and youth at risk in 2008 encompassing five Government ministries. This initiative has advanced a number of unique projects designed to reabsorb at-risk youth into the community, including through vocational and entrepreneurship training. These programmes are designed to meet the needs of Israel's diverse population, which includes immigrants from around the world.

Israel strongly supports the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. It was the most comprehensive document on the issue of youth at the time of its adoption in 1995. Sixteen years later, it remains just as valid, providing a policy framework for both national and international action to improve the situation of young people.

At the international level, Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation (MASHAV) has trained hundreds of thousands of educators and

young people from all over the world. For example, MASHAV's Mount Carmel International Training Centre has been cooperating for a decade with the Organization of American States with a view to introducing entrepreneurship as a self-help tool for young people in the Americas. The project has trained more than 22,000 people across 29 countries in Latin America and in the Caribbean islands.

In the past year, numerous courses in English and Spanish have been held within the framework of the United Nations International Year of Youth on subjects including entrepreneurial skills for youth and business management for young people.

Israel strongly supports paragraph 28(h) of the outcome document (resolution 65/312) of the High-level Meeting on Youth, which underscores the need to protect young people affected or exploited by terrorism and incitement. Israel knows these challenges all too well. The struggle against terrorism calls for vigilance, resolve and collective action on the part of the international community. We must focus on promoting cultures of tolerance and mutual understanding instead of violence and hate, putting an end to the incitement of young people that is all too common in many corners of the world.

Many of the greatest lines of separation we see in the world today are not between civilizations, but rather between generations. Facebook, Twitter and a range of other tools are creating exponential changes and providing new opportunities for people to interact, learn and grow. Those raised in the digital age will serve as our bridge to the future.

I see this demonstrated in Israel, where our younger minds serve as a powerful force for innovation. Youth who would have once grown oranges are now producing Orange mobile phones. Those who would have in the past cultivated apples are now designing Apple computers.

The challenges before the international community call on us to tap into the creativity of the next generation. We must empower and encourage all of our youth to take up responsibility in the global community and to seize the opportunities and harness the new technologies before us in order to create a more prosperous, more tolerant and more peaceful world.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

Mr. Mahmood (Bangladesh): Let me begin by extending our heartfelt condolences to the families of the 68 persons who were victims of the gruesome killing in Norway last week. Every life on this Earth is precious, and we are so sad to note that most of those killed were young people attending a summer youth camp.

Bangladesh appreciates the holding of this High-level Meeting on Youth and the adoption of the outcome document (resolution 65/312). Young people are the most important resource of a country. A nation's development and prosperity mostly depends on the positive activities of its youth.

In Bangladesh, the Department of Youth Development was established in 1981 with a view to bringing the nation's youth into the mainstream of our country's national development process by providing proper guidance, motivation and needs-based development training. To engage unemployed youths in the national development process, the Department has been implementing massive programmes on motivation, skill development training, self-employment, microcredit support and community development, so that trained youths can set up self-employment projects with a view to reducing poverty.

In Bangladesh, until June 2010, about 3.43 million young people were trained in different sectors, particularly in computers, including Internet and networking; graphic design and video editing; livestock, poultry, pisciculture and agriculture; tailoring; block, batik and screen printing; electronics and electrical and house wiring; refrigeration and air conditioning, and so on.

The average income of a self-employed youth ranges from $20 to $670 per month. In some cases, successful self-employed youths earn more than $1,300 per month in a country where average per capita income is merely $670 per annum. Moreover, a good number of trained youths have obtained jobs in different organizations at home and abroad. As of May 2010, $120 million had been disbursed under a microcredit programme for establishing or expanding self-employment projects. The loan recovery rate is nearly 90 per cent.

Pursuant to its election manifesto, the present Government has introduced a national service programme for providing employment to unemployed youths who have completed their secondary education. They are employed for two years on a temporary basis. Initially, three poverty-stricken districts were selected. The unemployed youths receive three months of basic training on 10 selected modules and are then assigned to different nation-building departments, autonomous bodies or local Government bodies, and so on.

Volunteer youth and Government organizations are also playing significant role in the rural development. To promote the active participation of youth organizations in the development process, the Department of Youth Development has taken steps to enlist youth organizations. About 14,000 youth organizations have already been enlisted with the Department.

On 12 August 2010, International Youth Day was observed in Bangladesh with due solemnity. At the national level, the Day started with a rally that was followed by a seminar on dialogue and mutual understanding, in line with the selected theme for the International Year of Youth. A huge number of youth leaders were engaged in the opening and closing ceremony of the eleventh South Asian Games and the World Cup Cricket inaugural ceremony that recently took place in Dhaka.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the commitment of the Government of Bangladesh to converting today's youth into tomorrow's most productive sector of society and to ensuring that the Government increasingly emphasizes meeting the education and training needs of young people, encouraging their moral development and taking measures within the limited resources available to create job opportunities for them.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Karev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The delegation of the Russian Federation was pleased to join the consensus adoption of the outcome document of the High-level Meeting on Youth: dialogue and mutual understanding (resolution 65/312). We should like to express our gratitude to the coordinators and all of the participants in the negotiation process. Thanks to their constructive and crucial approach, we were able to reach agreement on the outcome document that reflects the interests of all States.

Today's meeting, the culmination of the International Year of Youth, is a way not only to evaluate the results of increasing understanding of and focus on the interests of youth, but also to increase the active participation of youth in all areas of life and create a way for them to empower themselves. It is also a launching pad for defining objectives for the future.

The Russian Federation attaches great importance to the issue of youth. There are 40 million people in our country, representing some 27 per cent of the population. Let us not forget that while young people are among the most active participants in society, they are the hardest hit by the consequences of different types of crises. Young people, at the beginning of their life's path, are often unable to deal with such consequences.

In addition to enjoying great mobility, young people are readily able to adapt themselves to new conditions and acquire new knowledge. Clear proof of this fact is the role of young people in recent world events. Great hopes are also placed on young people as a primary motor of overcoming the adverse impacts of the global financial and economic crisis. That is the very reason that the Russian Federation is providing for young generations as a long-term investment in a stable and flourishing society.

The implementation of coordinated policies in that respect has been taken up by the Russian Federation's Ministry of Sport, Tourism and Youth Policy. The Federal Agency for Youth also operates under that Ministry. It is a national State body whose activities are concentrated on developing youth potential in Russia.

Our country's policies and programmes to guarantee the interests and rights of young people are in step with the priorities of the United Nations, including the World Programme of Action for Youth. The priorities formed a basis for events that took place in 2009 in the context of the Year of Youth in Russia, which sought to bolster the professional and creative potential of youth, advocate a moral and healthy way of life, and cultivate the ideals of peace and understanding among peoples.

On 27 June every year since 1993, we have celebrated the Day of Youth in Russia, on which

meetings, concerts, and sporting and other types of events are held throughout the country. On 27 June this year, a meeting was held between the Ministry of Sport, Tourism and Youth of the Russian Federation with leaders of youth movements at which discussions were focused, inter alia, on the International Year of Youth.

Current economic and social conditions call for particular attention to be paid to issues relating to enhancing the well-being of young people by resolving issues such as their professional placement and stable employment. In that regard, the federal target programme, Young People in Russia 2011-2015, will be a key document over the next five years. This document is designed to create conditions conducive to successful socialization and effective empowerment of young people by fostering their participation in the social and political life of the country, and by using their potential to further innovation in our country.

The International Year has been a striking demonstration that young people are not only recipients of State aid, but can themselves contribute to their countries and the international community as a whole. The Year also showed the need to create an environment where young people can be integrated into all areas of social life so as to increase their contribution to the social and economic development of States.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Slovenia.

Ms. Štiglic (Slovenia): Allow me at the outset to express my country's condolences to the people and Government of Norway for the tragic loss of all those young people who were taken away by a senseless and unimaginable act of terrorism.

Slovenia aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

The future of our societies depends on the future of our young people. In particular, it depends on what we policymakers can do to enable young people to participate in society, to ensure quality education, to guarantee health services and to create employment opportunities. The current financial and economic crises have had a strong impact on young people, leaving many of them unemployed and living in poverty. This in turn affects their social inclusion, which is key to the sustainability, stability and prosperity of societies.

Young people have to be involved in decision-making processes, including through youth-led organizations. These organizations do not only represent the voice of youth, but are also important forums for the promotion of tolerance, dialogue and mutual understanding. It is therefore important to strengthen the role of youth and of youth-led organizations and to support their increased involvement in the development of strategies and policies at all levels and on all issues, such as sustainable development, climate change and human rights.

In particular, we should enhance cooperation between youth organizations or platforms from different regions through concrete, grass-roots projects and programmes that directly involve young people. Non-formal education should be considered a core tool to this end.

In working with youth, Slovenia is building on its long-lasting tradition. We encourage youth development and the social integration, personal growth and autonomy of young people through various programmes and projects. The Slovenian Government encourages the creation of conditions for including young people in social and political processes and therefore co-finances the activities of many grass-roots youth and youth work organizations.

Many participatory structures for children and young people have been developed. Young people have their own peer organizations that present their views in decision-making processes at the national and local levels. For example, the youth parliament initiative, where pupils can speak publicly, is a pivotal demonstration of child participation in social and political processes.

Furthermore, the Government has established two consultative bodies that comprise representatives of youth organizations and various ministries on an equal basis. They propose measures and monitor the consideration of youth interests in various public policies at the national level, and in particular they promote youth participation in these processes.

Last but not least, the significance of voluntary work is highly appreciated in Slovenia. We strongly believe that volunteering contributes to the

strengthening of social capital, promotes peace and solidarity, and breaks new ground for sustainable socio-economic development. The role of young volunteers is an effective tool for youth empowerment as it enables them to develop their professional qualifications, academic knowledge and specific skills, contributes to their future work and employment possibilities, and strengthens their social inclusion and cohesion.

Young people are a force for change. Despite growing recognition of their needs, they still continue to be marginalized and ignored in many parts of the world. We must fulfil our obligations and build a prosperous future for them by mobilizing all political strength and instruments and by implementing the World Programme of Action for Youth. We also have to achieve universal ratification of international instruments, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols. In this respect, Slovenia strongly supports the campaign for the universal ratification of the Optional Protocols by 2012.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Togo.

Mr. Menan (Togo) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like at the outset to convey to the Assembly the warm and cordial sentiments of the authorities of Togo, in particular the President of the Republic, who is among the youngest Heads of State in the world.

I would also like to convey to the President of the General Assembly and to the co-facilitators, the Ambassadors of Benin and Austria, the vigorous thanks of my Government for their exemplary role in organizing this meeting. This meeting gives us a welcome opportunity to assess the status of youth — a social group that represents a majority of the world population.

The International Year of Youth declared by the United Nations, which began on 12 August 2010, was designed to encourage Member States to step up their actions to improve dialogue and mutual understanding among young people, to promote their participation at all levels, and to work to eliminate all obstacles facing them. In this regard, the major activities undertaken in Togo were aimed at finding innovative solutions to address the unemployment problem, which increases the vulnerability of young people and prevents them from realizing their potential. Our activities also seek to improve the institutional framework for promoting the participation of young people in all national decision-making and public affairs processes.

Actions carried out at the institutional level include the establishment in 2005 of a ministerial department devoted specifically to issues relating to young people and youth employment; the adoption of a national youth policy in 2007; and the establishment and operationalization of the Togo National Youth Council in 2008. More recently, with a view to promoting inclusive dialogue and exchanges among young people themselves, on the one hand, and between young people and Government authorities, on the other, the Government decided to create a National Youth Forum. The first Forum was held from 18 to 20 April and gave an opportunity for an exhaustive consideration of the status of young people in Togo in the light of their new civic engagement. To ensure the lasting effects of this initiative, the Forum will be held every two years.

With regard to the promotion of specific issues affecting young people, in particular those relating to youth employment and social inclusion, the Togolese Government has increased programmes and projects aimed at expanding opportunities and youth employment in both the salaried and independent employment sectors. Emphasis was placed on promoting micro-, small and medium-sized businesses, which are recognized as job creators, through the establishment of mechanisms to facilitate the access of young people to credit.

Moreover, two years ago we launched a far-reaching programme to promote civic responsibility and the active participation of young people. The programme has been implemented with the participation of young people, youth organizations and local communities.

In spite of all regional, national and international efforts, Togo believes that only increased solidarity in the framework of an international partnership will enable us to achieve the objectives of the International Year of Youth and to provide follow-up to the World Programme of Action for Youth. The delegation of Togo therefore calls on all States and stakeholders to heed the wise words of an eminent Togolese statesman, who said that no sacrifice is too great if it is made for the future of our youth. The outcome document

adopted by the Assembly on 26 July (resolution 65/312) represents an opportunity to continue our actions to provide timely solutions to the many challenges that young people face.

In conclusion, I reiterate our solidarity and condolences to the Government and people of Norway in the wake of the painful tragedy and loss visited on the peaceful young people of that country. Togo condemns such terrorist acts sadly perpetrated by brazen, lawless individuals.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Valero Briceño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Venezuela reiterates its condemnation of terrorism and all forms of violence, and extends its solidarity to the families of the victims and to the people and Government of Norway in this tragic time that has plunged the country into mourning.

My delegation thanks the President of the Assembly for organizing this event. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

On 21 October 2009, Venezuela adopted the People's Power for Youth Act, outlining the rights and obligations of young people in various areas of their social development. Additionally, on 7 July 2011, the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez Frías, announced the creation of the Ministry of the People's Power for Youth in the context of measures aimed at consolidating the people's power for youth.

Venezuela believes that education is the foundation of social change and an instrument for the liberation of peoples. In my country, the inclusion of youth in the education system is guaranteed at all levels. There were 200,000 university students in Venezuela in 1999; there are now 2.5 million. More than 9.3 million Venezuelans — one third of the population — have access to communication and information technologies, particularly the Internet.

In its article 79, the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela recognizes young people as active agents of development. The Youth Act expands and elaborates on that provision, establishing the National Youth Council to encourage active participation on the part of young people. Over the past 12 years, in the course of the Bolivarian revolution, policies have been established and developed to promote engagement on the part of young people, a large percentage of whom hold responsible positions in institutions of the people's power. Our country hosted the Latin American and Caribbean Youth Congress for Peace and Sovereignty from 28 to 30 June, at which young people pledged to fight to make our region a zone of peace and development.

The successes achieved by our youth in the arts, science, culture and sports during the years of the Bolivarian revolution are evident and undeniable. Venezuela ranks fifth in the world in university enrolment. The excellence of the Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra System is recognized throughout the world. Venezuela won the greatest number of medals at the fourth Games of the Bolivarian Alliance of the Americas, currently being held in our country. As was recently seen in the Copa America, Venezuela has emerged as one of the outstanding soccer teams of our region.

We call on all nations to provide new generations with the tools necessary for all people living on the Earth to lead humanly rewarding lives and to live in harmony with each other and with nature.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. Sefue (United Republic of Tanzania): I commend the able leadership of the President of the General Assembly and his Bureau, and I assure them of my delegation's continued full support and cooperation. Like others, I want to extend Tanzania's sympathy and condolences to the people of Norway and to join others in denouncing in the strongest terms possible such dastardly and heinous acts of terrorism and intolerance.

My delegation associates itself with the statements made by the representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the representative of Namibia on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Tanzania supports the SADC proposal to create a dedicated United Nations entity for youth.

Proportionately, Africa has the youngest population of any continent. That is a huge resource for the good of Africa and of the world. If that resource is to bear fruit, however, we need to prepare young

people to be the responsible, accountable and democratic leaders of Governments and captains of business we want them to be. My Government believes that young people are not only the leaders of tomorrow, but that they can be the leaders of today and make an important contribution, side by side with their elders, to building their countries.

Through affirmative action, young people of both genders are represented in Tanzanian decision-making bodies, including Parliament. Tanzania has also formulated several policies, strategies and plans with clear goals and measurable targets to open up opportunities for young people. We continue to invest heavily in improving quality and expanding access to education and skills at all levels. With the support of the International Labour Organization, we are fighting the worst forms of child labour.

We are also focusing on the health and vitality of our youth, including by working to prevent teen pregnancies, HIV/AIDS and other infectious and non-infectious diseases. We have established a youth development fund, and we encourage savings and credit societies and microcredit programmes to give young people access to concessional investment financing. We are promoting young people's employment in farming and non-farm rural service businesses to enable them to find a better life within their communities. We are participating in regional programmes that address all of these issues, and we thank the bilateral and multilateral partners who support our national and regional programmes. We count on their continued and enhanced support.

Globalization and the technology that drives it have put young people across the world in a global village and given them an acute consciousness of where they are and where they could be. Globalization builds and fuels aspirations — political, economic, cultural and social. Some of these are aspirations that many of our national Governments cannot meet on their own with their existing resources and policy space, or at the kind of speed that young people want.

Social media, on which our young people are hooked, are useful tools for positive change. Unfortunately, they can also produce negative outcomes. In other words, globalization gives our young people aspirations, but does not always give them the right tools, capacity or fair opportunities to realize their dreams. This can be destabilizing, and its effects will be felt beyond our borders. Let us all then support the efforts of national and regional Governments and create a fair globalization that unites the youth of the world not only inspirationally but materially as well.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia.

Mrs. Salman (Malaysia): Let me begin by joining other speakers to offer our condolences to the people of Norway for the horrendous attack that claimed the lives of more than 80 young people.

The Malaysian delegation wishes to express its gratitude to President Deiss for convening this meeting. It is very heartening to see so many young people gathered in this Hall today. Only through discussion and discourse can we truly understand the younger generation's hopes and aspirations in order to strengthen the economic, social and cultural relations between countries.

Forty-three per cent of the Malaysian population — some 12.5 million Malaysians — are young people aged between 15 and 40. Due to this large number, Malaysia has a Ministry dedicated to overseeing the well-being of its young people. The Ministry of Youth and Sports is tasked, among other things, with preparing the youth community to contribute to the nation's growth, development and prosperity and to further encourage it to create a successful nation. The Government of Malaysia has in place a full range of the support systems needed to enhance youth participation and empowerment at all levels.

In terms of policies, in 1985 Malaysia was one of the earliest States to formulate a national youth policy. That initiative was subsequently enhanced in 1997 and became the National Youth Development Policy. The Policy encompasses areas such as youth empowerment, human resource development, youth leadership and youth enterprise development. In addition, the Tenth Malaysia Plan, with its mission of working towards making Malaysia a progressive and high-income nation, recognizes youth participation as a critical component of the nation's growth. It therefore aims to create a generation of forward-looking young people who are motivated to pursue academic and career excellence.

In addition to the various policies it has in place, the Government continues to engage with the younger

generation through events. For example, in May, Putrajaya, the city that is home to the federal Government administrative centre, was turned into a sea of young people who came there in celebration of National Youth Day, honouring the country's young people. The celebrations included a youth convention, which discussed directions for achieving change for young people. Putrajaya has also been officially declared a youth-friendly city.

Furthermore, in affirmation of the importance of the work of the United Nations, in August 2010 Malaysia hosted the Second Global Model United Nations, in which more than 500 young representatives from across the globe participated, developing leadership as well as decision-making skills during simulated sessions of the General Assembly and other multilateral bodies of the United Nations system.

Malaysia takes great pride in the fact that it has given due recognition to youth development perspectives, both regionally and internationally. Nevertheless, Malaysia hopes that the outcome document of the High-level Meeting on Youth (resolution 65/312) will be translated into concrete action so as to further the youth development agenda. Malaysia is also committed to enhancing and developing our community of young people as empowered entities and responsible citizens, in order to ensure that peace and prosperity remain not only a permanent feature of our nation but can also contribute to the betterment of our global village.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Thailand.

Mr. Srivali (Thailand): The Thai delegation shares with Norway a deep sense of outrage and sorrow at the massacre in Utøya. It is a painful reminder for us to redouble our efforts on behalf of young people everywhere and to create an environment where they are nurtured, empowered and given every opportunity to be all they can be.

The challenges facing Thailand's youth are broadly similar to those in many other developing countries. Our embrace of economic globalization has, within a few decades, transformed family structures, the distribution of wealth and access to opportunities. Economic development has brought greater material well-being and reduced poverty, but it has also brought wider income disparities, glaring gaps in opportunity, and the proliferation of unsustainable consumption and lifestyles. Thailand's young people are greatly affected by these changes. Unequal access to opportunities in education and employment means that we have young people who are highly capable and skilled, yet also vast numbers who are vulnerable and unprepared for the heightened economic competition under globalization.

To address these complex challenges, Thailand believes that a coordinated approach is of the utmost importance. Our Constitution and specific laws provide a legal framework that protects children and young people while promoting their development. At the political level, we have a National Committee for Youth and Child Development, chaired by the Prime Minister, on which youth representatives sit. In 2009, the Government launched a policy offering 15 years of free education. Meanwhile, urban/rural disparities are being addressed through greater decentralization of policy implementation, which means greater participation at the local level.

For the International Year of Youth, we have also been organizing activities to promote cross-cultural understanding among young people of different faiths and ethnic backgrounds within the country. Thailand is also proud to send two youth delegates to participate in drafting and delivering our national statement under the social development agenda in the Third Committee at the commencement of every General Assembly session. Thai youth delegates have attended the Assembly for a number of years now, and we hope that more and more developing countries will be able to do the same in order to give a stronger voice to young people from developing countries in the arena of the General Assembly.

Such efforts, of course, are but a starting point. More can and must be done. We place much hope in the outcome document we have adopted (resolution 65/312), which we believe should serve to reinvigorate our common efforts for youth through its many thoughtful, solid and concrete proposals. We must take this declaration forward together, in a manner that will encourage the dreams of today's youth to take wing and lift humanity towards the brighter future it deserves.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Gonsalves (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): Saint Vincent and the Grenadines aligns

itself with the statements made by the representatives of Suriname on behalf of the Caribbean Community, and of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, respectively. We also align ourselves fully with the expressions of sympathy and solidarity with the people of Norway, in the wake of their recent horrific tragedy. Words cannot express the sorrow and outrage of the international community at this act of terrorism.

It is an unfortunate truth that youth and governance are oftentimes uneasy bedfellows. The traditional halls of power and politics — including this very General Assembly Hall — are often dominated by those for whom youth is but a dim memory. Our approaches to problem-solving — opaque, bureaucratic and frustratingly incremental — tend to be at odds with the typical passion, decisiveness and activism of youth. Furthermore, many of our political leaders have failed to earn the trust of young people, seeing them merely as an emotional wave to be ridden into or out of political office. Others seek to cynically grasp a mantle of "change" that belies their own status as senior citizens whose principles and transformative credentials have long since been sacrificed on the altar of political ambition.

But the world's youth need not be mistrusted, harnessed, indoctrinated or marginalized. They need to be listened to; they need to be embraced; and they need to be made active and leading partners in national development and global governance. The pace of change and development has accelerated exponentially, and the world that lies one generation into the future will be radically different from the one that we grapple with today. The pace of change — for good and ill — will be a defining feature of tomorrow's global village, and it is one that we have no experience in managing, or even predicting. It is today's youth who will inherit that world, and it is today's youth who must be taken into the confidence of leaders and policymakers on every step of our journey into the future.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reiterates the central sentiment of the CARICOM Declaration on the Future of Youth in the Caribbean Community, namely, that young people are not problems to be solved, but, rather, invaluable assets and partners in development of our subregion. The creativity, innovation and energy that will chart a new course through the fallout of globalization and the ongoing economic crisis lies with our youth, and not with the orthodoxy that led us into the crises we now face.

In that regard, it is useful to recall a truism first attributed to former United States President Franklin Roosevelt: "We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future." As such, the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has invested heavily in the youth at all levels of society. We have, in the past decade, achieved universal access to secondary education and are well under way to universal access to early childhood education. State spending on tertiary education has increased exponentially, and every single one of our students — with the cooperation of the Governments of Portugal and of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela — will soon have their own laptop computer, to engage the world beyond the narrow confines of our small island developing State.

Young people have also been thrust into positions of great responsibility at all levels of Government and public service. Senators, ministers, diplomats and other high-level officials are all part of this burgeoning youth brigade. Young Vincentian entrepreneurs, sportspersons and cultural artists continue to create jobs, influence debate and create new pathways for future development. Our national trust and faith in the youth is unshakeable.

The international community must tangibly demonstrate even greater levels of trust and faith in the youth. The challenges they face are often without parallel in historical memory. In our region, the youth confront transnational crime, HIV/AIDS, climate vulnerability and a technological explosion amid an uncertain economic environment, with changing modes of production and distribution of capital that have yet untold implications for the next generation.

This high-level event must have something to show for itself beyond a tepid outcome document. It must be the beginning of a re-imagining of the role of the youth in our national development and global governance, and the starting point of a genuine effort to mainstream youth issues and embrace our young people as equal partners in this journey into an uncertain future.

Anything less would be simply another attempt to use young people as a photogenic backdrop for further political grandstanding. But as we have learned in recent months, the price of such marginalization of young people and their needs and concerns can be

politically and societally cataclysmic. Let us heed the lessons that the youth have been trying to teach us.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ireland.

Ms. Anderson (Ireland): I am honoured to address this High-level Meeting of the General Assembly. It has been particularly encouraging to see so many young people and their representatives in attendance and participating actively in this gathering.

I join with other participants in expressing our deep condolences to the Government and the people of Norway on the terrible loss of life in the tragic attacks of last Friday.

Ireland aligns itself with the statement made by the Acting Head of the delegation of the European Union (EU), Mr. Pedro Serrano, on behalf of the member States of the EU.

At the outset, let me make three short points in relation to the World Programme of Action for Youth. First, Ireland values a human-rights-centred approach to the implementation of the Programme. The Programme itself recognizes that its successful implementation requires the full enjoyment by young people of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and a strong commitment by Member States to combat any violations of these rights. That approach and commitment must infuse all our efforts.

Secondly, gender equality is imperative in order to fully realize the aims of the Programme. In seeking to combat some of the challenges facing young women and girls — poverty, inequality, the combination of multiple forms of discrimination, sexual and gender-based violence, especially in conflict, limited access to education or health care, including sexual and reproductive health care — we must focus on empowering young women and girls as agents of change.

Thirdly, we are acutely conscious of the developmental aspect. Almost 90 per cent of the world's 1.8 billion young people aged 15 to 24 live in developing countries. Recognizing and building on the vast potential of those young people is essential for the realization of the Millennium Development Goals.

Let me say a word about some recent developments in Ireland that may be of wider interest. The new Irish Government has demonstrated a strengthened focus on youth affairs with the creation of a full Cabinet position of Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and the corresponding establishment of a new Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

A commitment has been made to develop a youth policy framework to support children and young people in the 10-to-24-year age range. The overall aim of the framework is to clarify and enhance coherence, connectivity, coordination and delivery in youth services and related out-of-school-time services for young people in that age range. The intention is to enhance the development and participation of and support for young people; achieve greater coordination and coherence in the provision of youth services; and ensure that such provision is high-quality and outcomes-based.

The question of youth participation is particularly important. As the outcome document (resolution 65/312) adopted earlier this week recognizes, the participation of young people themselves in designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating effective policies is critical to achieving the objectives of the World Programme of Action. The Irish Government is strongly committed to promoting the participation of children and young people in civil society, and the past decade has seen the establishment or consolidation of a range of structures to achieve that objective. These include local youth councils, a national youth parliament, student councils, a children's and young people's forum, a children and young people's participation support team, along with an inclusion programme and national consultations.

Within the wider effort to promote participation, we have placed particular emphasis on empowering marginalized young people. An inclusion programme, which was established in 2007, aims to provide new opportunities for seldom-heard young people to become involved in decision-making structures. The inclusion programme has been realized through the participation of a number of civil society organizations. These organizations work with gay and lesbian young people, young travellers, young people living in care, young people living with disabilities and young people from disadvantaged communities. As we move forward, the intention is to capture the lessons learned from the inclusion programme to ensure that an increasing number of young people who may be at risk of marginalization can take part in decision-making structures and process.

Ireland has one of the youngest populations in Europe. In difficult times as well as in good times, our young people remain our greatest resource. We want to offer them — all of them — greater opportunities to help craft the future of our country. It is our hope that this International Year of Youth will have helped towards making such opportunities available to young people worldwide.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Charles (Trinidad and Tobago): Trinidad and Tobago joins with previous speakers in extending condolences to the Government and people of Norway following the dastardly acts which resulted in the loss of life of many young people who represented the very flower of that nation's future.

Further, Trinidad and Tobago wishes to align itself with the statements made by the representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and the representative of Suriname on behalf of the Caribbean Community. In addition, we wish to make a brief statement in our national capacity.

In recognition of the importance of young people to community and national development, Trinidad and Tobago has developed a national youth policy that reflects a flexible and dynamic social development process between the Government and civil society and from which various national programmes and activities materialize. These relate in part to education, health, gender equality, addressing youth crime and violence, including drug-related crime, youth unemployment and youth leadership development.

The national youth policy promotes youth empowerment and participation, placing young people at the forefront of policy development and implementation. At the same time, it recognizes the Government's responsibility for creating the necessary facilitative framework to ensure that young people can make informed choices, lead meaningful, productive, enjoyable lives, and contribute to the attainment of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. Further, it is noteworthy that the portfolio for youth-related affairs is now under the purview of the newly created Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development.

In commemoration of this International Year of Youth with the theme "Dialogue and mutual understanding", and based on the approach adopted by the United Nations system, Trinidad and Tobago has developed a number of initiatives that fall under the three main areas identified by the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development. In this regard, one significant initiative was the launch of the National Youth Consultation Programme, in which young people were provided with opportunities to be included in decision-making processes through participation in consultations with Government ministers.

It is imperative to promote dialogue between Governments and young people, to foster mutual understanding and to better address the issues affecting them, as young people are key partners in the development and advancement of our societies. In this connection, I quote the Chinese proverb which states "Tell me and I will forget, show me and I may remember, involve me and I will understand".

In keeping with this approach, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has therefore increased youth participation and partnerships within communities by developing their capacities to dialogue with their peers and relevant stakeholders. The Government has also facilitated youth development through national leadership training programmes, peer education workshops and community social projects that harness discussions with young people in relation to the design and implementation of programmes to meet their needs. In this context, we encourage Member States to promote dialogue with young people in their own countries so that they become and remain involved in decisions that ultimately affect their future.

Trinidad and Tobago reaffirms the World Programme of Action for Youth and continues its implementation while we recognize the need to further develop and improve the current international framework on young people to effectively address the new challenges they face.

The time has come to move beyond dialogue to implementation and resource mobilization in order to empower young people and further the development of our societies as a whole. In closing, I wish to join my colleague from Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in quoting Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who said "We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future".

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Grenada.

Ms. Williams (Grenada): Grenada associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Suriname on behalf of the Caribbean Community and the statement made by the representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Through you, Sir, and on behalf of my Government and the people of Grenada, especially the youth, the delegation of Grenada expresses deep and heartfelt sympathy with the Government and people of Norway on the inexplicable killing of the young and not-so-young. The attack on Government buildings and young people strikes at the very heart of understanding, and we mourn the loss of life.

Equally, Grenada expresses solidarity with all the young people and families worldwide who are set upon by wars, famine and bombings. Most especially, we mourn the hundreds now dying every day in the Horn of Africa from famine. We support the United Nations call for global emergency relief and for longer-term sustainable development for those communities.

Grenada welcomes this High-level Meeting on Youth and extends congratulations to all the young people of the world. This conference is an opportunity for the international community to re-examine and scale up its efforts to respond to the many needs of young people. In this regard, we welcome the outcome document (resolution 65/312) and we look to its full and effective implementation and to the involvement of all young people in doing so.

Like in most countries, the young people of Grenada hold great promise. That promise, however, is weighed down by social and economic forces that lead to high rates of unemployment and other challenges. Yet, we continue to witness the emergence of a strong and positive national youth sector that is underpinned by a national youth policy.

Our young people, especially our girls, are graduating from secondary school in record numbers and going on to succeed in colleges and universities in equally record numbers. From primary to secondary level, our young athletes are breaking sports records and some, including our competitors in men's 400 metres and in women figure's skating, are setting their eyes on Olympic competitions. Watch out, Jamaica! Watch out for Kirani James!

Many more Grenadian youths are in professional schools and in the cultural sector and are becoming successful entrepreneurs. The number of young leaders, youth parliamentarians and youth ambassadors is growing, and there is a healthy and exhilarating dynamism that they spread as they succeed. Government spending focuses on youth training and job creation, rehabilitation and empowerment.

Far too many young people cannot achieve their potential due to poverty and lack of opportunity. As the United Nations prepares to commit to sustainable development in the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development process, Grenada reiterates its vision of our young people, who will play a stronger role in national sustainable development. That is why we call on the United Nations and others, including businesses, to engage in partnerships with us and to support us in the inclusion of youth within the democratic process, job creation and economic empowerment and in the development of the necessary frameworks to strengthen grass-roots youth organizations.

In closing, Grenada understands that young people are valuable to national development, but that they are far more than a national development resource. Rather, like other groups, young people have an intrinsic value to themselves and to humanity. It is our responsibility to do much more to honour and to empower them so that they, too, can make the right choices for themselves and for the world.

Grenada extends its best wishes for success to all youth delegates, and wishes them a safe journey back to their loved ones.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Bulgaria.

Mr. Raytchev (Bulgaria): At the outset, let me join all previous speakers and express, on behalf of my country, our deepest sympathy for the people and Government of Norway following the horrendous and tragic attacks of Friday that claimed the lives of so many young people.

I feel honoured to speak before this High-level Meeting on a topic that is of particular relevance nowadays — how to improve conditions for the world's youth and help young people address their aspirations to participate in processes that shape their lives and their future. The importance that we attach to

such issues comes from the realization that youth is the natural driving force behind important changes in global development. Recent developments in the Middle East and North Africa once again point to the key role of young people as agents of social change, progress and development. They have also reaffirmed the vital role of new technologies and social media in empowering the voice of young people and their participation in shaping public opinion and the political decision-making process.

We are satisfied that the outcome document adopted earlier in the meeting (resolution 65/312) reconfirms the World Programme of Action for Youth as a major political instrument for comprehensive action on youth issues. It is of paramount importance to focus our efforts on its thorough and improved implementation at all levels, including by strengthening national capacities and democratic mechanisms for dialogue and partnerships with young people and youth-led organizations in decision-making processes affecting youth. Cooperation among national Governments, youth organizations and other stakeholders at the national, regional and global levels is a critical element of strategies and policies to achieve social integration, employment and poverty eradication.

Bulgaria fully supports the statement made by the observer of the European Union (EU) earlier in this debate, outlining the programmes and activities on youth in Europe. I wish to focus briefly on our national experience and efforts to address youth issues in the context of the EU cooperative action.

The National Youth Strategy 2010-2011, adopted by the Bulgarian Government in 2009, primarily focuses on employment and sustainable development, including the promotion of economic activity and career opportunities for young people. The target group of the Strategy is young people between 15 and 29 years of age. Concrete actions for its implementation are aimed at improving the quality of high-school and university education, promoting lifelong learning, providing more internships and strengthening the relationship between education and business. Support is envisaged for companies providing jobs to young people, especially in small towns and rural areas. Students' participation in scientific projects and high-tech innovations are also encouraged and supported.

Bulgarian young people are actively involved in projects under the EU programme Youth in Action, which is related to implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy. In promoting knowledge and understanding of democratic citizenship and the rule of law, such projects are conducive to making young people receptive to human rights standards and values, addressing in particular certain negative societal views, discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Under the National Youth Strategy, volunteering is encouraged as one avenue to enhance youth potential and skills in different professional and scientific areas. In the context of the European Year of Volunteering, the fourth National Youth Meeting, which took place in Varna from 30 June to 4 July, discussed the advantages of volunteering for both young people and recipient institutions and businesses, with the active participation of civil society.

Last but not least, let me also highlight our participation in international cooperation and United Nations youth-related initiatives. In that particular field, the role of the United Nations remains indispensable. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria closely cooperates with the United Nations Association in Bulgaria to ensure the coordination of activities promoting youth participation at the United Nations. The joint plan of action between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the United Nations Association, signed at the beginning of this year, provides for developing initiatives that foster the more active involvement of young people in United Nations activities, including areas such as the Millennium Development Goals, peace, human rights and sustainable development.

Part of that partnership is the arrangements for the selection and participation of youth representatives in the youth delegate programme. The national selection process, which is currently being conducted for the sixth consecutive year, aims at ensuring that the most proactive and knowledgeable students are given the opportunity to represent Bulgarian youth and to work alongside diplomats and other youth delegates from all over the world. We are proud that over the decades, Bulgaria has demonstrated its commitment to youth matters and that it is one of the countries with the longest-standing experience in providing a platform for the Bulgarian youth perspective to be voiced in the United Nations context.

In conclusion, let me express our confidence in the successful conclusion of this important conference. We are determined to contribute actively to ensuring a better future for the youth worldwide.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

Mrs. Espósito Guevara (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like first of all to extend our most heartfelt condolences to the brother people of Norway on their recent tragedy, whose main victims were young people.

The Plurinational State of Bolivia endorses the statement made by the representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Young people are a driving force of change in any society. It is they who, with their energy and rebellious spirit, show us the path to follow. Nevertheless, many of them look to the future with fear, since they have done all that society expects of them and yet cannot find work. From that position of insecurity, they have explained to us that what is needed now is profound change. We cannot continue down that path. The power of change is moving through world and young people are its driving force.

In Bolivia, young people have also made their vital contribution. In the past decade, young people of all social strata have occupied squares and streets, defending the natural resources of my country and the rights to a wage and to life, water, gas, health care, employment and, above all, the future. They fight against the plunder and demands of the Bretton Woods institutions and multinational companies.

The economic and financial crisis, the energy and food crisis, the water crisis, climate change, wars and invasions have hit young people hard. These are structural problems that we need to resolve so that present and future generations can live in peace and security. Climate change, lack of jobs and wars have forced young people to migrate to other regions and countries. In this search, they have faced racism, discrimination and violence. As migrants, they endure the rigours of their illegal status, abuse and racial hatred. They also face similar barriers in access to university education. These are some of the challenges youth is facing today.

The Government of the Plurinational State of Bolivia has developed policies for our youth. Bolivia is the third country in Latin America to be illiteracy free, and is envisaging a post-literacy programme with the support of our sister Republics of Cuba and Venezuela. With the financial resources from gas income, we have established three indigenous universities to promote access to higher education for indigenous youth, and we have supported various types of sport under the slogan "High-altitude sports".

"My First Decent Job" is another programme focused on the young population, aimed at increasing the inclusion in the workforce of young, low-income graduates. We have also implemented credit and microcredit programmes to help young people undertake productive projects related to housing and workforce entry. Today, women also have access to land through a land distribution and redistribution programme. We also have special programmes for open housing options aimed at providing comprehensive care to young workers who have no protection and are socially disadvantaged. The Bolivian Volunteering Act monitors the rights and responsibilities of young volunteers.

Young people are the present and the future, and are thus the protagonists of change. We hope that the outcome document of this High-level Meeting on youth, dialogue and mutual understanding (resolution 65/312) will promote the participation of young people in making decisions about the future and in particular in building other means of development that are in harmony with nature, as an alternative to globalization, which has excluded young people, especially in the poorest countries.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Liechtenstein.

Ms. Gregg (Liechtenstein): It is a great honour to be able to speak to the Assembly as a youth representative of Liechtenstein.

I extend my country's deepest sympathies to those affected by the horrific loss of lives in Norway. Let this meeting result in a renewed commitment to striving day to day, in solidarity, against such expressions of hate.

I have had the luck of growing up in a free and prosperous part of the world. But already as a small kid, seeing images of war, famine and environmental catastrophe, I realized that most children and youth in the world were less lucky. Over the years, these images

helped me develop a sense of responsibility and an understanding of interconnectedness that led to transformative action, first within my own home and at school and now as I strive towards my ideals day to day. I believe that young people have an innate sense of justice, and with the right kind of education, we develop a desire to act on it. Our sense of responsibility and energy to act are the world's greatest untapped assets.

Participation is not just an option, but a demand expressed by youth. In Norway, the young survivors of the massacre pledged to stay engaged in order to demonstrate that violence against opinion is ineffective. Arab youths have also reminded the world of the incredible power of peaceful protest. This should be a sobering thought for leaders who continue to deny young people their inalienable human rights and an opportunity to pursue their dreams and ambitions. Not only do we increasingly possess a global consciousness, but we have the dexterity, ingenuity, courage and sense of urgency to use tools for mass mobilization to spread our voices. A free and open Internet is essential to this end.

The youths of Tunisia, who within six months have brought about jaw-dropping changes, serve as an inspiration and guidance to their peers in many other countries. The litmus test of real transformation will be the level of participation of women and young people in leadership positions and in decision-making processes.

We must apply the lessons learned from revolutions in the Arab region to other situations of injustice as well. Why not organize large-scale demonstrations for other pressing issues or turn our fight against climate change into a global news event? Learning about our human rights gives us the clarity and focus to act. This is why human rights education and learning are so important. Human rights education allows us to view our own rights and our community's rights in dialogue with others locally, regionally and globally, resulting in a common language of humanity. The exhilarating solidarity we feel with the youth activists in the Arab world is based on a renewed understanding of the universality of human rights and has turned years of limited mutual understanding on their head. A society of peace starts with a basic human rights education.

As the global population hits 7 billion, it is not only a human right but also a demographic imperative to deliver sexual and reproductive health education and family planning. It is unacceptable that a 15 year-old girl living in South Sudan has a higher chance of dying in childbirth than of completing school. Human rights are indivisible and include sexual and reproductive rights. Young women and men must not let their bodies be subjugated by those in power. Well-informed reproductive decisions can have profound positive effects on the sustainable development of a country.

Using children and young people as instruments of war is among the most heinous violations of the laws of armed conflict. Liechtenstein reiterates its full support for the work for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. We also believe that fighting impunity is a prerequisite for long-term peace. The International Criminal Court plays an important role in this regard, as demonstrated by its first trial ever — that of Thomas Lubanga, charged with forcibly recruiting boys and girls to fight with his militia.

Liechtenstein further deplores attacks on schools and hospitals and threats against students and teachers, and we commend the Security Council for taking concrete action on this important issue.

On 25 May 2010, the United Nations launched a two-year campaign to achieve universal ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child that increases the age for direct participation in hostilities to 18. To support the campaign and to raise awareness about the plight of children affected by armed conflict, Liechtenstein has teamed up with a record label to produce a CD called "Right to Play". The proceeds from the sale go to Play31, a non-governmental organization that organizes football games among former child soldiers to assist in the process of reconciliation. Children affected by armed conflicts around the world are being deprived of this right. Let us give it back to them before it is too late.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Hassan (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to address this international forum to discuss the interests of youth in a desire for joint dialogue and mutual understanding. We welcome the statements that have been made on behalf of the Group

of 77 and China, the Group of African States and the Arab Group.

At the outset, I would also like to express our heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims of the heinous terrorist attack committed by an extremist in Oslo and Utøya Island, Norway. We condemn all forms of terrorism. This incident reaffirms that terrorism does not originate from a certain country or religion.

The Government of the Sudan gives high priority to youth issues. It has launched many projects to address youth unemployment, encourage youth investment through microfinance, AND develop vital sectors such as agriculture. We have also offered many opportunities in university and post-graduate education, and have seen a large increase in enrolment in recent years.

The Sudanese Government also takes an interest in many other youth programmes to support cultural and social activities and participation in sports and political life, and to combat unemployment by offering work opportunities. We also work to combat drug use and to raise awareness of the dangers of HIV/AIDS. We support marriage and family stability, and work to rehabilitate young people affected by wars, armed conflict and environmental degradation, as well as those with disabilities and special needs. We are proud of our success in those programmes and are willing to share our experiences.

The many and extreme challenges that young people face, especially in Africa and the developing world in general, are preventing their full participation in society. The problem is exacerbated by the effects of the global financial and economic crisis and the drought on the African continent. In that regard, we note that we need more international cooperation to support training and education in all fields, including the exchange of scientific knowledge.

The Sudan, understanding the importance of African efforts, recently inaugurated the headquarters of the African Youth Union in Khartoum, housing its general assembly. As another indicator of our interest in youth, we have the honour to host the headquarters of the Arab-African Youth Council, further confirming the Sudan as a meeting place for Arab and African youth. We also stress the need to work diligently to achieve the Millennium Development Goals to the benefit of young people. We have also worked to increase access for youth to information and communication technology through educational grants and training.

In conclusion, we hope that this important meeting will promote the interests of youth in many sectors, and in particular that it will help youth in States affected by armed conflict or that suffer under foreign occupation.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Serbia.

Ms. Ivanović (Serbia): At the outset, I would like to express, on behalf of my Government and the people of Serbia, deepest condolences to the Government and people of Norway and our sympathies to the families of the victims of the horrifying terrorist attack that happened last Friday.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union two days ago. I shall therefore address some of the priority issues regarding youth from our national standpoint.

We have witnessed many changes, positive and negative, that shape the world in which we live today. To make the most of the possibilities presented to us and to diminish risks in the future, we must include young people in all walks of social life in a consistent and coherent way. To make sure that we have leaders for tomorrow, we must create them today.

Recognizing the importance of its youth, Serbia established the Ministry of Youth and Sport in 2007 and devised a national youth strategy the following year, after a series of 167 round tables at which, alongside the representatives of many relevant institutions, the young people of Serbia were given an opportunity to contribute their ideas to the drafting of that important document.

Calling on young people to take a proactive attitude in life is one of the priorities of Serbia's national youth strategy. To increase their ever greater social participation, the Ministry of Youth and Sport initiated and encouraged the establishment of local offices for youth. In 2007, they numbered five; today there are 123 of them all over Serbia. As a matter of fact, two thirds of all local Government agencies have been instrumental in establishing those offices, true to the fact that the needs of youth must be addressed first and foremost in the communities in which they live, that is, at the local level. Over 100 municipalities have

adopted local action plans for their young people and provided funds to finance programmes and projects designed to address the needs of their youth.

On 5 July, the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia adopted the Law on Youth. In this way, it made good on the promise made to Serbia's youth that it would be given, during the International Year of Youth, a law providing, inter alia, for the establishment of a Government Council in which youth representatives would account for at least one third of its members. Since the very beginning of the process, young people were included in consultations leading to the drafting and adoption of the law, reflecting the time-honoured truth that those who are supposed to benefit from legislation to be adopted should be the first to be asked what their expectations from the legislation are.

Ever since its establishment, the Ministry of Youth and Sport has fostered partnership relations with the civil sector. Such relations facilitate the inclusion of the young in the implementation of various projects of the national youth strategy. The Ministry supported and bankrolled over 500 projects submitted by associations of and for young people, aimed at, among other things, promoting healthy lifestyles and tolerance, preventing drug and alcohol addiction, improving the environment, social inclusiveness and voluntary activities, and addressing all topics that are important to young people. The Ministry extended financial support to various informal-education seminars and training courses on project elaboration, career skills and youth entrepreneurship, in order to help young people to find employment or start their own businesses.

The Ministry also helped build 280 outdoor and 47 indoor sports arenas all over Serbia. Better conditions were thus created for young people to engage in sport and recreational activities more actively and to spend quality leisure time. After all, those were the needs identified as those of young people themselves in many polls taken beforehand.

On 12 August, my country will mark the completion of the International Year of Youth and Youth Day by launching 134 voluntary youth activities selected in competitions in 25 districts of Serbia. We have been guided by the desire to support our youth in the year in which we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers and the European Year of Volunteering in order to demonstrate, through voluntary engagement, the power of young people to bring about change in local communities.

Serbia sets great store by its youth. Investment in young people is investment in the country's future. Since 2008, the Young Talents Fund of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, headed by the Minister for Youth and Sport, has granted scholarships and various awards to over 6,000 talented high-school students, winners of national and international competitions in the fields of science, the arts and sports, university seniors and Serbian students studying abroad. The recipients pledged to work in Serbia upon completion of their studies, which is one of the measures to forestall the brain-drain that affects many countries around the world.

No speedy and sustainable development is possible without investment in human resources and without making sure that those resources remain in the country of their origin. Funds like the Young Talent Fund can help keep the young educated people in developing countries, thus enabling them to stay and prosper at home.

The challenges facing the young call for concerted common efforts at all levels of Government — local, provincial and national. It is necessary to work in partnership with international organizations and United Nations agencies and to enlist non-governmental organizations and the business sector in designing youth policies. There is plenty of room for improving youth cooperation in order to arrive — through the exchange of ideas and experiences at the national and international levels — at the most effective institutional models that will facilitate the development that we all need.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

Mr. Faqiri (Afghanistan): On behalf of the Afghan Government, I would like to stress the need for further efforts to be made to support young people in developing their capacity to tackle the challenges they face.

Let me emphasize that the primary responsibility for ensuring that youth development lies with States. Today, I will address both the challenges ahead for Afghan youth and achievements accomplished thus far.

Afghanistan is a country of youth. Sixty-eight per cent of the population is under 25 years of age. The bulk of the population is to a certain extent deprived of their fundamental rights, including but not limited to lack of educational and employment opportunities. The situation of girls is of particular concern. Youth literacy rates are low — 50 per cent for boys and 18 per cent for girls. Secondary school enrolments for boys and girls are 23 per cent and 7 per cent, respectively, and less than 2 per cent of the Afghan population reaches higher education.

Faced with these challenges, Afghan youths are at risk. Their vulnerability is exacerbated by unemployment, low wages, lack of safety and security, poverty and lack of medical care, making youth particularly at risk to recruitment by armed opposition and terrorist organizations.

In the face of these challenges, we should not lose sight of the progress made so far. Currently, more than 7 million boys and girls are enrolled in schools, investing in their futures. We have constructed more than 4,000 schools across the country. We predict that we will have 9 million children enrolled in schools by 2020, and over 40 per cent of new students will be girls. Additionally, the great majority of Afghanistan's population has access to basic health care, showing that great progress has been made over the past 10 years.

I seize this opportunity to thank the international community for the continued support we have received to achieve these objectives. It is worth mentioning that a considerable percentage of the Afghan Parliament is comprised of members of the young generation. News agencies, television broadcasters, monthly magazines are run by the youth generation.

The Government of Afghanistan is committed to fulfilling its responsibility to protect the rights of youth. We have initiated a number of strong steps at the national, regional and international levels, which include the launch of a national youth programme that reiterates our commitment to the development of the sons and daughters of Afghanistan and seeks to establish an opportunity for Afghan youths to fulfil their aspirations.

Today's generation of youth in my country, having experienced conflict and exile, must now be empowered with alternative opportunities. Their fresh perspectives, energy, enthusiasm and determination must be channelled to promote peace and development in the country.

I wish to conclude by joining previous speakers in expressing the condolences of the Afghan Government and the Afghan people to the Mission of Norway and, through it, to the people of Norway on the recent act of terror that caused dozens of casualties.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See.

Archbishop Chullikatt (Holy See): Last year, the General Assembly, in declaring the present International Year of Youth, insightfully drew attention to two important elements for the advancement of peace, namely, dialogue and mutual understanding. This theme has been an invitation to listen to the aspirations and interests of young people, to engage in a mutual exchange with them, and to translate these exchanges into a real sharing of wisdom for the common good.

Each and every child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment. The family is where young people first learn moral responsibility and respect for others. The family has an important role to play in educating children to develop all their faculties and in training them to acquire ethical and spiritual values and to be deeply attached to peace, liberty and the dignity of all men and women. The family, founded on the marriage between one man and one woman, is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and must be guaranteed protection by society and the State.

Parents — mother and father together — have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of their children. Parents cannot withdraw from this essential role. States are called, in conformity with international instruments, to respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents in this regard. Youth policies, programmes, action plans and commitments approved by Member States must respect fully the role of parents regarding their children's well-being and education, including in the area of human sexuality and sexual and reproductive health, which should not include abortion.

Many people in the world today do not have stable points of reference on which to build their lives, and so they end up being deeply insecure. There is a

growing mentality of relativism and liberalism that holds that everything is equally valid, and that truth, absolute points of reference and moral standards do not exist. Such a way of thinking leads not to authentic freedom, but rather to instability, confusion and blind conformity to the fads of the moment with which certain cultures around the world tempt our youth. Young people are entitled to receive from previous generations solid points of reference to help them make choices on which to build their lives.

Member States and this Organization can make positive contributions in this regard and so must be willing to recommit continually to upholding and implementing the principles enshrined in the Charter and the internationally agreed fundamental human rights instruments. The more they are able to do this, the more our young people will be able to help advance the cause of peace and build societies based on respect for spiritual and ethical values and directed to the common good of all.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): At the outset, allow me to convey our sincerest condolences to the friendly people and Government of Norway. The Palestinian people and their leadership were shocked to learn of last Friday's atrocious bombing of a Government complex in Oslo and the shootings on the island of Utøya which left nearly 80 innocent people dead, including scores of young people. We are confident that Norway will fully recover from this painful tragedy and emerge even stronger.

Palestine aligns itself with the statement delivered by Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

As today's world grows more volatile for youth, they continue to unnecessarily suffer grave hardships and to face an unprecedented number of obstacles. This has affected their realization of peace, prosperity, freedom and the right to education. Regrettably, Palestinian youth face the greatest obstacle to any semblance of normal life: the ongoing Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel's blatant disregard of and disrespect for international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law.

For more than four decades, crimes have continued to be committed against Palestinian youth, with total disregard for human life and with complete impunity, which has allowed for such crimes to continue at the expense of our youth. Israel's refusal to uphold the basic principles of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions has resulted in a complete deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. This has only prolonged the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the suffering of the Palestinian people, in particular the millions of Palestine refugees who have been living in refugee camps for 63 years, yearning for the realization of their right of return.

Despite all of the obstacles that face the Palestinian people living under occupation, Palestinian youth continue to reach for their goals and dreams. Among them are young refugees who every day overcome the difficulties they face and reach as high as they can to let their voices be heard and their talents seen. Just last week, for the third time, youth in Gaza, including some with disabilities, broke the Guinness World Record for the largest handprint painting in the world. Also, in another remarkable story, three young Palestinian women from a school run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), with the help of their teacher, invented a walking cane for the blind and deaf, which gave them the opportunity and the pleasure of meeting with the Secretary-General last summer here in New York.

These are only the most recent of the achievements, which are proof that, if given a chance, the youth of Palestine can rise up and be leaders in the region and the world. Moreover, just moments ago on this very day, the youth of Gaza broke the Guinness World Record for flying the most kites at the same time, setting a fourth Guinness World Record. Once again, we place on record our deepest gratitude for the tireless efforts of UNRWA for its assistance to the 4.5 million Palestine refugees, especially the youth, because the education and training it provides has equipped our youth with the tools they need to make a name for themselves and accomplish such lofty goals.

Although the Palestinian people, including youth, have made significant strides to overcome the grave hardships of living under occupation, they will never be able to achieve their full potential so long as Israel continues to occupy their land and impede their right to

self-determination. Here, we call on the international community to make all necessary efforts and muster the political will to address the obstacles and challenges faced by Palestinian youth living in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

Indisputably, the 44-year occupation of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, has severely hampered development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other internationally agreed development goals, making it nearly impossible to fully attain them. But over and above worries about achieving the MDGs, youth living in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, have on far too many occasions been deliberately targeted, shot and killed and even been used as human shields by the Israeli occupying forces. Palestinian youth who exercise their right to freedom of expression against the Wall and illegal settlements every week are met with the bullets and aggression of the occupying Power. Our youth also continue to be the victims of Israeli settler terror attacks — shot, beaten and threatened while walking to school or playing outside their homes.

The Israeli aggression against the besieged Gaza Strip in 2008-2009 tragically highlighted the utter disregard for Palestinian youth. Hundreds of them were killed, and scores of what were supposed to be safe havens, such as hospitals and schools, were shelled, bombed and destroyed with impunity. We call on the international community, including all United Nations organs, to address these grave violations, without selectivity, in order to bring an end once and for all to all attacks by the occupying Power against Palestinian youth at civilian infrastructures meant to protect them.

The Israeli occupation, which began in 1967, must come to an end now along with all of the occupying Power's crimes against the Palestinian people, including youth. Each and every day of Israel's occupation results in a deterioration of the socio-economic conditions and the overall well-being of youth, especially in the besieged Gaza Strip, where the four-year immoral and illegal siege continues to strip young people there of all their basic human rights, including the right to food. The blockade has afflicted thousands with hunger, malnutrition, anaemia, stunted growth and many other preventable diseases.

There is no time to be wasted. We thus renew our appeal to the international community to uphold its responsibilities and to take immediate, decisive action to bring Israel, the occupying Power, into compliance with international law, including its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention and the relevant United Nations resolutions. The youth of Palestine will be able to live to their fullest potential only if they can live in peace, freedom and dignity in an independent State of Palestine based on pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The time is now ripe to make this a reality.

Peace may be necessary for leaders, but peace is indispensable for our youth.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 47/4, of 16 October 1992, I now give the floor to the representative of the Observer of the International Organization for Migration.

Mr. Wade (International Organization for Migration): Before I begin, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) would like to express its sincere condolences to the people of Norway in the wake of this awful tragedy. Our thoughts are with them.

The International Organization for Migration is honoured to participate in this dialogue along with such an impressive group of experts and young people.

This High-level Meeting comes at an important time to reflect upon the wave of democratization sweeping through the Arab world and the role youth have played in a fundamental shift in the terms of political debate. The panel discussions held over the past two days have provided enormous insight into the challenges they face and into what can be achieved through dialogue and mutual understanding. The International Organization for Migration believes more than ever that the United Nations and its partners are listening. Quite simply, there is no alternative. In most of the world today, youth not only represent the future; they are also the majority of the population. Addressing the challenges and opportunities of our time will depend upon their energy and creativity.

A recurring theme throughout this dialogue has been a sense of frustration among young people in societies where the voices and needs of youth are ignored and where hopes of meaningful employment,

development and political participation are stifled. For example, in one county with one of the world's fastest growing youth populations, only one or two of every 30 graduates has a prospect of employment, and those that do find employment could expect to be paid 15 times as much if they migrated to the developed world.

Migration is the most fundamental step that a young person can take to escape poverty, and young people today are taking it in enormous numbers. In the past quarter-century, the number of international migrants has doubled to 214 million, half of whom are under the age of 29. Many of these young people, travelling with their dreams and those of their loved ones, face enormous challenges. The perilous journeys of crowded boats from North Africa tell of an enormous human cost. Not only are these young people negotiating the borders of a new country, region and culture, but they are often also taking the first steps into adulthood.

At the same time, global youth migration presents enormous opportunities, both for the young people themselves and for global prosperity. In a world where many of the developed countries are facing population aging and decline and the developing world is growing and getting younger, youth migration has huge potential to increase economic growth and reduce unemployment. According to the World Bank, if rich countries were to admit enough migrants from poor countries to expand their labour forces by a mere 3 per cent, the world would be richer by $356 billion a year.

In its role as the principal intergovernmental organization for global migration, IOM is dedicated to promoting humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all. We must recognize that some of the greatest challenges faced by migrants are not physical, but social barriers of xenophobia, social marginalization and discrimination.

The PLURAL+ Youth Video Festival, a joint initiative of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and IOM, recognizes young people as powerful agents of social change in a world often characterized by conflict and division. The Festival encourages young people to explore issues of migration, diversity and social inclusion and to share their voices and creative vision with a global audience. Since it was launched in 2009, over 400 videos from 75 countries have been received, and through our network of over 50 partner organizations, winning videos have been screened in dozens of festivals, cinemas and broadcasts on television networks throughout the world. We hope that some members had a chance to see these remarkable videos on Monday at the PLURAL+ side event. The insight and creativity with which young people speak to issues such as human trafficking, social marginalization and racism reflect the energy that youth brings to addressing social problems in today's world.

Rarely, if ever, has the aspiration for democracy been more powerfully demonstrated than during the youth-led movements of the Arab Spring. It is now the responsibility of the international community to engage with young people and translate this energy into reforms that promote social integration, security, employment and the eradication of poverty. We greatly appreciate the opportunity to discuss these issues at this important meeting and, after engaging with key experts and young people, feel confident that together we can face the challenges and grasp the opportunities ahead.

The Acting President: In accordance with resolution 31/3 of 18 October 1976, I now call on the observer of the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Ms. McMillan (Commonwealth Secretariat): The Commonwealth Secretariat would like to take this opportunity to extend its condolences to the people of Norway.

The Commonwealth recognizes that the success of the Commonwealth and the global youth agenda are reliant on the commitment of young people throughout the world, and we salute them for their active contributions in promoting development, peace and democracy through such values as tolerance, understanding and respect — values that are dear to the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth acknowledges the recommendations expressed in the outcome document of this meeting (resolution 65/312) and believes that it is the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the recommendations that will make the International Year of Youth a lasting success.

The Commonwealth, through its Commonwealth Youth Programme, stands ready to unite and to work with the United Nations agencies, youth organizations and stakeholders to ensure that the recommendations of

the outcome document and the World Programme of Action for Youth are fulfilled.

It is the position of the Commonwealth Secretariat that the time is now for greater action and greater partnerships for youth development. The Commonwealth Secretariat believes that the time is right to work for greater economic empowerment, where banks and other segments of the private sector can also help young people gain access to credit by promoting enterprise and supporting youth development planning. The Commonwealth purports that it is time for greater political empowerment of young people, where Governments and stakeholders, including youth leaders, ought to do more to bring young people into local and national decision-making processes, creating greater political spaces where young people can play a role.

Young people are issuing a clarion call for meaningful change in the professionalizing of youth work and meaningful change in measuring, monitoring and evaluating the progress in youth development.

At the meeting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in 2009, stand-alone declarations were made under the them "Investing in young people". The Heads further signalled their commitment to young people by opening their meeting and holding frank and meaningful dialogue with them. This exchange of ideas on youth development has become a feature of the Commonwealth Heads of Governments' meeting since 2007, when it was held in Kampala, and could be a practice that other high-level meetings could adopt to make youth development more meaningful for young people.

This year, the International Year of Youth, the Commonwealth has listened to its youth, Governments and stakeholders at a number of consultations under the theme "Investing in youth". Among the events was the Commonwealth Youth Leaders' Conference, held in India in December 2010, at which young people from the 54 member States encouraged their leaders and decision-makers to establish meaningful change through youth mainstreaming, greater investments and participation in youth development, the raising of the profile and resources of youth ministries and agencies, and the establishment, expansion and strengthening of national youth councils within the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth Heads of Government, through the Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment 2007-2015, identified 13 priority actions for youth empowerment, addressing the Millennium Development Goals and the World Programme of Action for Youth. The Commonwealth will redouble its efforts to ensure that youth empowerment is kept in focus, thus achieving the targets that have been set.

The Commonwealth looks forward to the upcoming Commonwealth Youth Forum, alongside the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting, in Perth, Australia, in October, with a view to working with youth after the International Year of Youth — a time for implementing the Commonwealth's youth agenda.

Let this Assembly commit to the belief that truly there is nothing about youth without youth and that youth is at the centre of development.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker on this agenda item. The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 27.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.